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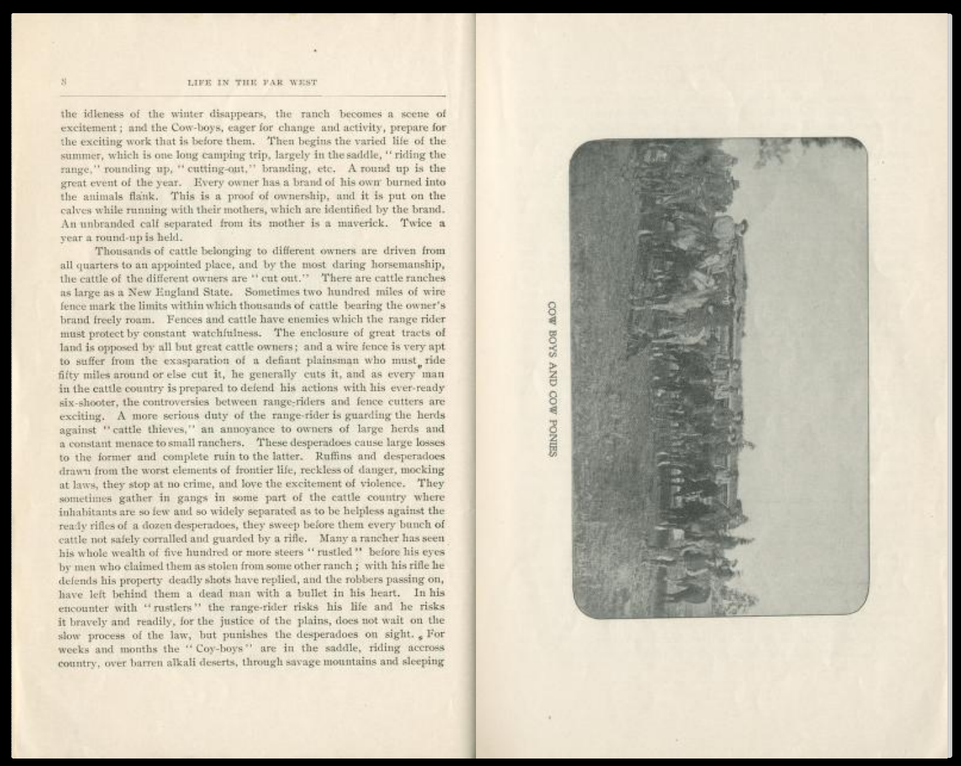
8 LIFE IN THE FAR WEST
the idleness of the winter disappears, the ranch becomes a scene of excitement; and the Cow-boys, eager for change and activity, prepare for the exciting work that is before them. Then begins the varied life of the summer, which is one long camping trip, largely in the saddle, "riding the range," rounding up, "cutting-out," branding, etc. A round up is the great event of the year. Every owner has a brand of his own burned into the animals flank. This is a proof of ownership, and it is put on the calves while running with their mothers, which are identified by the brand. An unbranded calf separated from its mother is a maverick. Twice a year a round-up is held.
Thousands of cattle belonging to different owners are driven from all quarters to an appointed place, and by the most daring horsemanship, the cattle of the different owners are "cut out." There are cattle ranches as large as a New England State. Sometimes two hundred miles of wire fence mark the limits within which thousands of cattle bearing the owner's brand freely roam. Fences and cattle have enemies which the range rider must protect by constant watchfulness. The enclosure of great tracts of land is opposed by all but great cattle owners; and a wire fence is very apt to suffer from the exasparation of a defiant plainsman who must ride fifty miles around or else cut it, he generally cuts it, and as every man in the cattle country is prepared to defend his actions with his ever-ready six-shooter, the controversies between range-riders and fence cutters are exciting. A more serious duty of the range-rider is guarding the herds against "cattle thieves," an annoyance to owners of large herds and a constant menace to small ranchers. These desperadoes cause large losses to the former and complete ruin to the latter. Ruffins and desperadoes drawn from the worst elements of frontier life, reckless of danger, mocking at laws, they stop at no crime, and love the excitement of violence. They sometimes gather in gangs in some part of the cattle country where inhabitants are so few and so widely separated as to be helpless against the ready rifles of a dozen desperadoes, they sweep before them every bunch of cattle not safely corralled and guarded by a rifle. Many a rancher has seen his whole wealth of five hundred or more steers "rustled" before his eyes by men who claimed them as stolen from some other ranch; with his rifle he defends his property deadly shots have replied, and the robbers passing on, have left behind them a dead man with a bullet in his heart. In his encounter with "rustlers" the range-rider risks his life and he risks it bravely and readily, for the justice of the plains, does not wait on the slow process of the law, but punishes the desperadoes on sight. For weeks and months the "Coy-boys" are in the saddle, riding accross country, over barren alkali deserts, through savage mountains and sleeping
COW BOYS AND COW PONIES

(10 of 76)

The life and adventures of the American cow-boy : life in the Far West / by Clark Stanley, better known as the Rattle-snake King.

by Stanley, Clark.

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Biography of Clark Stanley, a snake oil salesman.

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